

ART. XV. A NEW WATER SNAKE OF THE GENUS
NATRIX FROM MEXICO

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(PLATE XXV)

Some years ago an unusual specimen of *Natrix* from Tampico, Mexico, was lent to me by the British Museum (Natural History). It bore many resemblances to *N. rhombifera* (Hallowell) but whether it represented an undescribed race or was merely an atypical individual could not be determined from a single specimen.

Recently, however, four additional specimens from near Tampico were sent to me for identification and study, by M. Graham Netting of the Carnegie Museum. These, in conjunction with a few other specimens in other collections, have demonstrated the existence of a southern race of *N. rhombifera*. The northern subspecies henceforth should be known as *Natrix rhombifera rhombifera* (Hallowell), and for the southern form I propose the name

***Natrix rhombifera blanchardi*² subsp. nov.**

Diagnosis: Scutellation similar to that of *N. r. rhombifera* but color pattern much reduced. The belly of *N. r. blanchardi* is nearly immaculate which is in striking contrast to the strongly marked belly of *N. r. rhombifera*. The dorsal pattern is somewhat reduced, decidedly more obscure, and sometimes has a tendency to form longitudinal stripes.

Range: The geographic range of the specimens which have been examined extends from Garza Valdez, Tamaulipas, west to Valles, San Luis Potosí, and south to Tlacotalpan, Vera Cruz.

Types: Holotype, Carnegie Museum no. 9512, ♂, Tamaulipas, Mexico, within a radius of 85 miles of Tampico in the triangle formed by the Rio Tamesi and the Rio Panuco; collected between January 15 and February 20, 1937, by Mr. J. M. Sheppard. Paratypes, Carnegie Museum nos. 9513, 9514, and 9515 with same data as holotype;

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² In honor of the late Dr. Frank N. Blanchard.

British Museum (Natural History) no. 267, Tampico, Mexico; Field Museum of Natural History no. 1389, Montemorlos, Nuevo Leon, Mexico, no. 2039, La Antigua, Vera Cruz, Mexico, no. 2079, Garza Valdez, Tamaulipas, Mexico; U. S. National Museum no. 46533, Tlacotalpan, Vera Cruz, Mexico; and private collection of E. H. Taylor and H. M. Smith no. 5412, twenty miles south of Valles, San Luis Potosí, Mexico.

Description of holotype: Scutellation of the head similar to that of *N. r. rhombifera*. The unpaired plates of the head are as follows: rostral wider than high; frontal pentagonal, somewhat longer than wide, with concave lateral borders, truncate anterior margin, and a slightly pointed posterior margin; mental triangular, slightly deeper than wide. The paired plates are as follows on each side: nasals 2, with the nostril between them; internasal subtriangular, longer than wide; prefrontal slightly wider than long; loreal about as deep as long; one preocular; one superciliary; 3 postoculars; temporals 1 + 3; one parietal; 8 upper labials, the fourth and fifth beneath the eye, the seventh the largest; 11 lower labials on the left side and 10 on the right, the sixth the largest on each side; posterior chin shield longer than the anterior and diverging widely from its fellow. Tubercles numerous on anterior chin shields and first pair of lower labials, fewer on posterior chin shields, mental, and second to sixth pairs of lower labials.

Dorsal scale formula of body, 25-25-21; 143 ventrals; anal divided; 82 pairs of caudals. Dorsal scales strongly carinated, less so on first row. Total length, 814 mm.; tail length, 215 mm.

Dorsal ground color slate grey upon which an obscure pattern of slightly darker blotches is arranged mainly into three series, a median dorsal series alternating with a lateral series on each side; about 30 blotches in dorsal series on body, 16 on tail, becoming progressively smaller and finally extinct in advance of the tip; dorsal blotches usually narrower in midline, expanding slightly laterally and connected by traces of diagonal bars with blotches of lateral series; in the neck region the dorsal and lateral blotches show a tendency to form longitudinal stripes; top of head almost uniform brownish-slate; centers of upper labials and rostral somewhat yellowish; lower labials and mental yellowish and mostly with dark margins; chin shields, gulars, and anterior ventrals yellowish to cream white; posterior ventrals greyish-white; caudals dusky and often with faint traces of spots along their anterior margins; belly practically immaculate.

Variation: Examination of the ten specimens at hand reveals no significant structural difference from *N. r. rhombifera*. Of the six male specimens, five have the dorsal scale row formula 25-25-19, one 25-25-21; the ventrals range from 141 to 151, average 144.66; the

only two with complete tails have 80 and 82 caudals respectively. The four females have each a different dorsal scale row formula, as follows: 27-27-21, 27-27-20, 27-25-21, and 25-25-19; their ventral count ranges from 136 to 147, average 140.25; three with complete tails have 63, 67, and 70 caudals. All of these figures, and those of two other specimens which I have not examined personally, are within the extremes of similar data on *N. r. rhombifera*.

Most of the paratypes other than the Carnegie series are not so dark as the holotype and show almost no tendency toward the formation of longitudinal stripes. They agree with the holotype in being almost immaculate below.

One specimen, Field Museum no. 2039, from La Antigua, Vera Cruz, is surprisingly similar to *N. r. rhombifera*; its occurrence so far from the known range of the latter is not readily explained.

Acknowledgments: To the following persons I am indebted for the loan of specimens: Dr. Doris M. Cochran, U. S. National Museum; Mr. M. Graham Netting, Carnegie Museum; Mr. H. W. Parker, British Museum (Natural History); Mr. Karl P. Schmidt, Field Museum of Natural History; and Dr. E. H. Taylor, University of Kansas. Dr. Howard K. Gloyd of the Chicago Academy of Sciences kindly supplied me with data on numerous specimens of *N. r. rhombifera* and on two specimens of *N. r. blanchardi*.

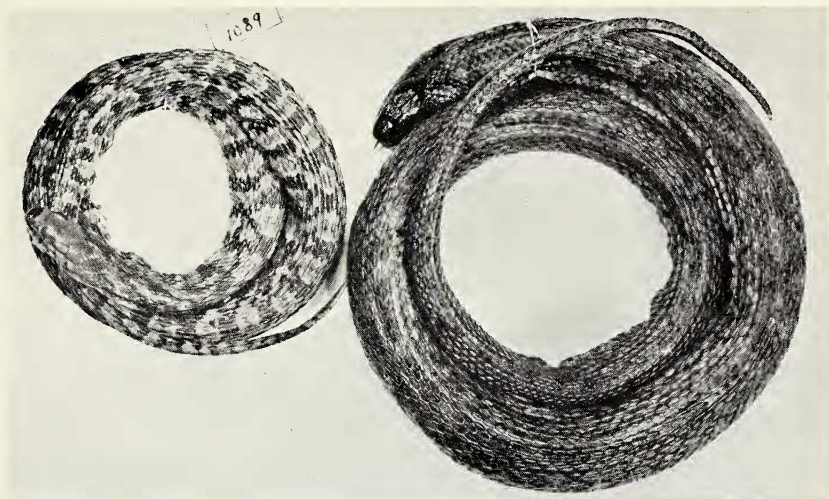


FIG. 1. Left: *Natrix rhombifera rhombifera* (Hallowell), Carnegie Museum no. 10,000 (formerly Wm. M. Clay no. 1089), San Antonio, Texas.
 Right: *Natrix rhombifera blanchardi* Clay, TYPE, Carnegie Museum no. 9512.

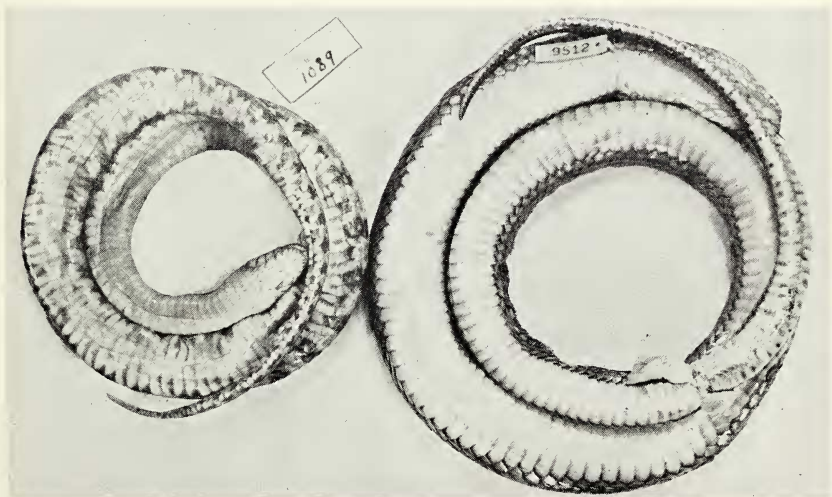


FIG. 2. Ventral views of the same specimens shown above.